DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 084 SO 034 420

AUTHOR	Loomis, Susan Cooper, Ed.; Bourque, Mary Lyn, Ed.
TITLE	National Assessment of Educational Progress Achievement Levels, 1992-1998 for Civics.
INSTITUTION	National Assessment Governing Board, Washington, DC.; ACT, Inc., Iowa City, IA.; Aspen Systems Corp., Rockville, MD.
PUB DATE	2001-07-00
NOTE	33p.; For NAEP achievement levels for U.S. history, see SO 034 421; for achievement levels for geography, see SO 034 423.
CONTRACT	ZA97001001
AVAILABLE FROM	ED Pubs, P.O. Box 1398, Jessup, MD 20794-1398. Tel: 877-433-7827 (Toll Free); Web site: http://www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Achievement; *Citizenship Education; *Civics; Cutting Scores; Elementary Secondary Education; *Grade 12; *Grade 4; *Grade 8; Political Science; Student Educational Objectives; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS	*National Assessment of Educational Progress; *Performance Levels; Sample Materials

ABSTRACT

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a survey of U.S. student knowledge and skills in different subjects at grades four, eight, and 12. NAEP combines samples of performances to provide information about the knowledge and skills of students in the United States as a whole, in each participating state, and in different demographic groupings. The report aims to increase understanding of the achievement levels for the National Assessment of Educational Progress: what they are, and what they are not. It is a reference for the U.S. public, particularly educators, parents, students, and policymakers. Seven booklets make up the report. Each booklet focuses on one of the subjects for which NAEP achievement levels have been set. This booklet focuses on civics. Information in the booklet can be helpful in interpreting accurately the meaning of the civics NAEP achievement levels and student performance relative to the levels. Achievement levels are: basic, proficient, and advanced. The report explains that there are three parts to NAEP achievement levels: (1) descriptions; (2) cutscores; and (3) sample items. It further explains that the achievement level descriptions are statements of what students should know and be able to achieve at each level. The cutscores represent the minimum score required for performance at each NAEP achievement level and are usually reported along with the percentage of students who scored at or above the level. Sample items provide illustration of student knowledge and skills required within each level of achievement. (BT)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 475 084

NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS
ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS

SO 034 420

National Assessment of Educational Progress
National Assessment Governing Board
U.S. Department of Education

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

National Assessment of Educational Progress Achievement Levels 1992–1998 for Civics

Edited by

Susan Cooper Loomis

Mary Lyn Bourque

July 2001

National Assessment of Educational Progress
National Assessment Governing Board
U.S. Department of Education

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD
naep

The National Assessment Governing Board

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) was created by Congress to formulate policy for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Among the Board's responsibilities are developing objectives and test specifications and designing the assessment methodology for NAEP.

Members

Mark D. Musick, Chair
President
Southern Regional Education Board
Atlanta, Georgia

Michael T. Nettles, Vice Chair
Professor of Education
University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Moses Barnes
Principal
Hallandale High School
Hallandale, Florida

Melanie A. Campbell
Fourth-Grade Teacher
West Indianola Elementary School
Topeka, Kansas

Honorable Wilmer Cody
Former Commissioner of Education
State of Kentucky
New Orleans, Louisiana

Daniel Domenech
Superintendent of Schools
Fairfax County Public Schools
Fairfax, Virginia

Edward Donley
Former Chairman
Air Products & Chemicals, Inc.
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Thomas H. Fisher
Director, Student Assessment Services
Florida Department of Education
Tallahassee, Florida

Edward H. Haertel
Professor, School of Education
Stanford University
Stanford, California

Juanita Haugen
Local School Board Member
Pleasanton, California

Honorable Nancy K. Kopp
State Legislator
Annapolis, Maryland

Honorable Ronnie Musgrove
Governor of Mississippi
Jackson, Mississippi

Roy M. Nageak, Sr.
First Vice-Chair
Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development
Barrow, Alaska

Debra Paulson
Eighth-Grade Mathematics Teacher
Dr. Hornedo Middle School
El Paso, Texas

Honorable Jo Ann Pottorff
State Legislator
Wichita, Kansas

Diane Ravitch
New York University
New York, New York

Sister Lourdes Sheehan, R.S.M.
Secretary of Education
United States Catholic Conference
Washington, D.C.

John H. Stevens
Executive Director
Texas Business and Education Coalition
Austin, Texas

Adam Urbanski
President
Rochester Teachers Association
Rochester, New York

Migdania D. Vega
Principal
Coral Way Elementary Bilingual School
Dade County Public Schools
Miami, Florida

Deborah Voltz
Assistant Professor
Department of Special Education
University of Louisville
Louisville, Kentucky

Honorable Michael Ward
State Superintendent of Public Instruction
North Carolina Public Schools
Raleigh, North Carolina

Marilyn A. Whirry
Twelfth-Grade English Teacher
Mira Costa High School
Manhattan Beach, California

Dennis Palmer Wolf
Senior Research Associate
Harvard Graduate School of
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Roy Truby
Executive Director, NAGB
Washington, D.C.

National Assessment Governing Board

Mark Musick
Chair

Michael Nettles
Vice Chair

Edward H. Haertel
Chair, Committee on Standards, Design and Methodology

Roy Truby
Executive Director

Mary Lyn Bourque
Project Officer

July 2001

Developed for the National Assessment Governing Board
under contract number ZA97001001
by ACT and Aspen Systems Corporation

Suggested Citation
Loomis, S.C. and Bourque, M.L. (Eds.)
National Assessment of Educational Progress
Achievement Levels, 1992–1998 for Civics,
Washington, DC: National Assessment Governing Board, 2001.

For More Information
National Assessment Governing Board
800 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 825
Washington, DC 20002-4233
877-464-3796
www.nagb.org

To Order This Report
Call tollfree 1-877-4ED-Pubs
or visit www.ed.gov/pubs/edpubs.html

Table of Contents

Understanding Achievement Levels for the Civics National Assessment of Educational Progress 1

Overview of the Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Civics 4

Achievement Levels: Descriptions and Cutscores 7

Achievement Levels: Sample Items 12

Performance Data 24

Understanding Achievement Levels for the Civics National Assessment of Educational Progress

Purpose of This Report

The purpose of this report is to increase understanding of the achievement levels for the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP): what they are, and what they are **not**. The report is a reference for the American public, especially educators, parents, students, and policymakers. Seven booklets make up the report; each booklet focuses on one of the subjects for which NAEP achievement levels have been set. These include mathematics, science, reading, writing, civics, U.S. history, and geography.

The information in this report will be helpful in interpreting accurately the meaning of the Civics NAEP achievement levels and student performance relative to the levels. NAEP provides information about student performance at the national, state, and district levels.

What Is the National Assessment of Educational Progress?

NAEP is a survey of American students' knowledge and skills in different subjects at grades 4, 8, and 12. NAEP combines the samples of performances to provide information about the knowledge and skills of students in the nation as a whole, in each participating state, and in different demographic groupings.

What Are NAEP Achievement Levels?

Congress authorized the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) to set achievement goals for student performance on NAEP. NAGB identified and defined the goals in terms of three levels of achievement: Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. NAEP achievement levels define ***what students should know and be able to do*** at the Basic, Proficient, and Advanced levels established by NAGB.

There are three parts to NAEP achievement levels: descriptions, cutscores, and sample items. The achievement levels descriptions are statements of what students should know and be able to do at each level. The cutscores represent the minimum score required for performance at each NAEP achievement level and are usually reported along with the percentage of students who scored *at or above* the level. Sample items provide illustrations of student knowledge and skills required within each level of achievement.

What Constitutes Basic, Proficient, and Advanced Achievement?

Proficient achievement is defined by NAGB as *"**solid academic performance** exhibiting competency over challenging subject matter."* The Basic and Advanced achievement levels are defined relative to this central level. Basic achievement is performance that exhibits *"**partial mastery** over skills fundamental to Proficient performance."* Advanced achievement exhibits ***superior performance***. Achievement that is less than partial mastery is referred to simply as "below Basic."

How Good Is Good Enough?

The overall achievement goal for American students is performance that qualifies at the Proficient level or higher. Meeting this goal for the nation as a whole will take time. Competency over challenging subject matter is not easily attained. The average performance score on NAEP in most subjects falls within the Basic achievement level.

How Should Achievement Levels Be Interpreted?

Unlike most assessments, there are no individual scores on NAEP. Achievement levels define performance, not students. Notice that there is no mention of "at grade level" performance in these achievement goals. In particular, it is important to understand clearly that the Proficient achievement level does not refer to "at grade" performance. Nor is performance at the Proficient level synonymous with "proficiency" in the subject. That is, students who may be considered proficient in a subject, given the common usage of the term, might not satisfy the requirements for performance at the NAEP achievement level. Further, Basic achievement is more than minimal competency. Basic achievement is less than mastery but more than the lowest level of performance on NAEP. Finally, even the best students you know may not meet the requirements for Advanced performance on NAEP.

How Are the Achievement Levels Developed?

The achievement levels-setting process is carefully designed, implemented, and evaluated with great attention to detail and technical precision. The process of developing achievement levels involves the judgments of informed, well-qualified people from throughout the nation and its territories. Approximately 30 persons serve on each of three grade-level panels to develop NAEP achievement levels. These 90 panelists include teachers (about 55 percent), other educators (about 15 percent), and members of the general public (about 30 percent). To the extent possible, the panels are proportionally representative of the nation's population with respect to region, race/ethnicity, and gender.

Panelists participate in a five-day process that includes training and instruction to prepare them for the standard-setting tasks. Panelists make three separate sets of judgments of student performance on NAEP items, and they receive a variety of feedback information about the implications of their judgments. Sophisticated psychometric methods are used to produce the feedback and guide the process.

Highly experienced staff and technical advisors carefully monitor the achievement levels-setting process. Panelists evaluate every conceivable aspect of the process, and their responses are fully analyzed. Extensive analyses are conducted to determine whether panelists seemed to be making logical, informed judgments and whether similar panelists would make similar judgments. Yet, there is no way of knowing that the standards are "right" because there is no true standard against which to evaluate the panelists' judgments.

Who Sets the Achievement Levels?

Under the law, the National Assessment Governing Board is the final authority on determining the levels and their use for reporting NAEP performance results. The Board reviews information about the process for setting achievement levels and panelists' opinions of it. NAGB considers the recommendations of panelists and technical advisors regarding the levels. The Board also considers additional information about student course-taking patterns in the subject area and student performance on other assessments in the subject. NAGB then judges whether the standards are reasonable and makes the final decisions for setting the standards. The panels for civics were convened in November 1998, and NAGB set the Civics NAEP Achievement Levels in May 1999.

Overview of the Framework for the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Civics

This section provides a brief overview of the Civics National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Framework that details what is and is not assessed by the Civics NAEP. Many questions must be answered before an assessment can be developed, and the framework answers those questions.

What Is the Civics NAEP Framework?

The framework is the guide to the assessment. It defines the structure, organization, and general content for the assessment. What constitutes civics education? What aspects of civics knowledge and skills should be assessed? How should different components of civics knowledge and skills be assessed? How much emphasis should be given to each? All of these questions and many more are addressed in the framework.[1] Answers to such questions shape the development of items and determine how student responses will be scored.

How Was the Framework Developed?

A national consensus process was used to develop the content of the framework documents for the Civics NAEP and the other subject assessments. Panels of content experts, practitioners, and professionals in related fields developed the Civics NAEP Framework to reflect the input collected from groups of scholars, state and local educators, civic leaders, and other interested citizens. Information about civics curricula was collected throughout the country. The panels of framework developers evaluated this information in light of their professional training and expertise. They also drew heavily from *The National Standards for Civics and Government.*

What Are the Components of the Assessment Framework?

The general goal set for the Civics NAEP is the assessment of how much and how well students are learning the essential knowledge and skills about democratic citizenship and government. The panels identified three interrelated components, representing the essential elements of civics education, as the basic units of the assessment: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic dispositions. Each assessment task measures both knowledge and an intellectual skill. Tasks may also measure students' understanding of the importance of participatory skills or civic dispositions. More than one content, skill, or type of disposition may be evident in a specific assessment task.

- *Civic knowledge* is the content component of the assessment—the core. This component is represented in five fundamental questions:

[1]Frameworks are available on the Internet at *www.nagb.org*. Printed copies of the framework for Civics and for other NAEP subjects are available from the National Assessment Governing Board. Copies are also available through the U.S. Department of Education's ED Pubs information center at 1-877-4ED-Pubs.

1. What are civic life, politics, and government?

2. What are the foundations of the American political system?

3. How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?

4. What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?

5. What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?

- *Civic skills* include both intellectual and participatory skills. Students must begin in the early grades to acquire both intellectual and participatory skills that support an informed, effective, and responsible citizenry. The skills will develop and mature as students progress through grades 4, 8, and 12.

  1. *Intellectual skills* include identifying and describing; explaining and analyzing; and evaluating, taking, and defending positions on public issues. The framework includes many examples to illustrate each type of intellectual skill in the context of civics.

  2. *Participatory skills* are categorized as interacting, monitoring, and influencing. These skills are necessary for people to be informed, competent, and responsible participants in the political process and in civil society.

     a. *Interacting skills* are those involving interpersonal relationships. They are the skills needed to communicate and work cooperatively with other citizens.

     b. *Monitoring skills* are those involving interactions with the political process and government. Intelligent citizen participation requires this skill.

     c. *Influencing skills* are those involving a specific form of the relationship of citizens to politics and governance. Namely, influencing skills refer to those needed to affect the processes of politics and governance.

  The framework includes numerous examples to illustrate each type of participatory skill in the context of civics.

- *Civic dispositions* refer to the character traits necessary to preserve and improve the system of governance. Civic dispositions are acquired and learned, just as traits associated with culture are acquired and learned. Civic dispositions develop slowly as a child develops and learns through experiences in the home, school, community, and other parts of civil society. The framework provides examples of civic dispositions that contribute to the general well-being of individual citizens, the political process, the system of government, and the common good.

The developers of the Civics Framework specified the proportion of items for each of the different components of the assessment. Testing time allocations for each content area of civic knowledge and in each area of intellectual skills were further specified by grade level. The relative allocations show how expectations of what students should know and be able to do vary according to grade level. For example, questions about *civic life, politics, and government* should consume

approximately 25 percent of the testing time for students at grade 4 but only about 10 percent for students at grade 12. Fourth graders should spend about 10 percent of their time answering questions related to *the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs,* while twelfth graders should spend about 20 percent of their time answering questions in this content area.

Approximately 15 percent of the tasks should relate to students' understanding and knowledge of participatory skills, and 10–15 percent of testing time should be related to questions about civic dispositions. Finally, about 60 percent of the assessment should be multiple-choice questions, 30 percent short constructed-response questions, and the remaining 10 percent should be extended-response questions.

Achievement Levels: Descriptions and Cutscores

Note: The performance of students on the Civics NAEP is reported on a scale of 0 to 300. The average score for all grade levels is 150 with a standard deviation of 35 scale score points. Italicized text is a summary of the achievement level description.

GRADE 4

Basic (136)

Fourth-grade students performing at the Basic level should have an understanding of what government is and what it does, and they should be able to identify some things that government is not allowed to do. These students should have some understanding of the foundations of the American political system. In the context of their school and community, they should understand rules and laws, rights and responsibilities, and ways to participate in governing. These students should know that the world is divided into many countries.

Fourth-grade students performing at the Basic level should have some understanding of what government is and what it does, and they should be able to identify some things that government is not allowed to do. They should be able to explain purposes of rules in the school and the community and to describe what happens when people break laws. These students should understand how national holidays and symbols such as the flag, the Statue of Liberty, and the Fourth of July reflect shared American values, and they should be able to identify different types of diversity in American society. They should be able to describe ways to settle disagreements or conflicts peacefully. They should be able to name the president and their state governor and to identify rights and responsibilities of a citizen. They should know some ways that students can participate in governing their school and community, and they should be able to describe qualities of a good leader. Finally, these students should know that the world is divided into many countries.

Proficient (177)

Fourth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should have a good understanding of what the American Government does and of why it is not allowed to act in certain ways. These students should have an age-appropriate understanding of the foundations of the American political system. They should understand purposes of laws, ways shared beliefs unify Americans, what it means to be a citizen, rights and responsibilities of citizens, and the idea of public participation in governing. These students should be able to describe ways in which countries interact with one another.

Fourth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should have a good understanding of what the American Government does and of the reasons why it is not allowed to act in certain ways. They should be able to explain why we have laws. These students should be able to recognize diversity in American society and that Americans are united by shared beliefs and principles. They should know that the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence are founding documents of American democracy. They should be able to explain how people make decisions about the ways they live together in a democracy and how groups in schools and communities can manage conflict peacefully. They should know what it means to be a citizen of their state and the nation, and they should be able to distinguish between rights and responsibilities of citizens. They should understand why it is important for people to participate in governing their school and community. Finally, these students should be able to describe ways in which countries interact with one another.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Advanced (215)

Fourth-grade students performing at the Advanced level should understand and be able to explain some purposes of government. When given age-appropriate examples, they should recognize differences between power and authority and between limited and unlimited government. They should be able to explain the importance of shared values in American democracy, to identify ways citizens can participate in governing, and to understand that with rights come responsibilities. They should be able to explain how nations benefit when they resolve conflicts peacefully.

Fourth-grade students performing at the Advanced level should understand and be able to explain some purposes of government. They should recognize differences between power and authority when given examples and should understand differences between limited and unlimited government. These students should be able to explain why it is important that citizens share a commitment to the values of American democracy, and they should be aware of the benefits and challenges of both unity and diversity in American society. They should be able to distinguish between services provided by local and state levels of government. These students should be able to describe how government can make it possible for people to accomplish goals they could not achieve alone. They should be able to identify ways in which citizens can keep track of their government's actions, and understand the connection between rights and responsibilities of a citizen. Finally, they should be able to explain how nations benefit when they resolve conflicts peacefully.

GRADE 8

Basic (134)

Eighth-grade students performing at the Basic level should have some understanding of competing ideas about purposes of government, and they should be able to describe advantages of limited government. They should be able to define government, constitution, the rule of law, and politics. They should be able to identify the fundamental principles of American democracy and the documents from which they originate, and they should understand the importance of a shared commitment to the core values of American democracy. They should recognize the components of the political process and understand personal, political, and economic rights and responsibilities. They should be able to describe the purposes of some international organizations.

Eighth-grade students performing at the Basic level should have some understanding of competing ideas about purposes of government, and they should be able to describe advantages of limited government. They should be able to define what is meant by government, constitution, the rule of law, and politics. These students should be able to identify fundamental principles and values of American democracy, such as federalism, the separation of powers, checks and balances, government by the consent of the governed, and individual rights. They should understand that the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, including the Bill of Rights and other amendments, are sources of these ideas. These students should be able to explain why it is important that citizens share the values and principles expressed in the nation's core documents, and they should understand functions of elections, political parties, and interest groups in a democratic society. They should know that American citizenship is attained by birth or through naturalization. They should be able to identify personal, political, and economic rights of Americans and should understand the responsibilities that these rights imply. Finally, these students should be able to describe purposes of international organizations to which the United States belongs.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Proficient (178)

Eighth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should understand and be able to explain purposes that government should serve. These students should have a good understanding of differences between government and civil society and of the importance of the rule of law. They should recognize discrepancies between American ideals and reality and be able to describe continuing efforts to address them. They should understand the separation and sharing of powers among branches of government and between federal and state governments, and they should be able to explain how citizens influence government. They should be able to describe events within the United States and other countries that have international consequences.

Eighth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should have a good understanding of purposes that government should serve, and they should be able to explain why government should serve those purposes. These students should understand differences between government and civil society, and they should be able to explain the importance of the rule of law. They should be able to point out ways in which ideals expressed in the nation's core documents differ from reality and identify ways in which these differences continue to be addressed. They should be able to explain how and why legislative, executive, and judicial powers are separate, shared, and limited in the American constitutional government, and they should understand how and why powers are divided and shared between the national and state governments. They should be able to discuss ways that citizens can use the political process to influence government. These students should be able to provide simple interpretations of non-text-based information, like maps, charts, tables, graphs, and cartoons. Finally, these students should be able to describe events in the United States that have influenced other nations, as well as events in other nations that have affected American policy.

Advanced (213)

Eighth-grade students performing at the Advanced level should have a developed understanding of how civil society helps to maintain limited government and why the rule of law is important. These students should have a clear understanding of issues in which democratic values are in conflict and of past efforts to address the discrepancies between American ideals and reality. They should understand how citizens can monitor and influence government and how responsible citizens support democracy. They should recognize the impact of American democracy on other countries, as well as other countries' impact on American politics and society.

Eighth-grade students performing at the Advanced level should have a developed understanding of why civil society plays a key role in maintaining a limited government and the importance of the rule of law in civil society and government. These students should be able to take positions on issues in which fundamental values are in conflict (liberty and equality, individual rights and the common good, and majority rule and minority rights, for example) and they should be able to defend their positions. They should be able to evaluate results of past efforts to address discrepancies between American ideals and national reality and to explain how citizens can monitor and influence local, state, and national government. These students should understand how laws can achieve purposes of American constitutional government, such as promoting the common good and protecting rights of individuals. They should understand how civic dispositions such as civility, tolerance, and respect for law promote the healthy functioning of American constitutional democracy. Finally, these students should understand the impact of American democracy on other countries, as well as the impact of other countries on American politics and society.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

GRADE 12

Basic (139)

Twelfth-grade students performing at the Basic level should have an understanding of what is meant by civil society, constitutional government, and politics. They should know that constitutional governments can take different forms, and they should understand the fundamental principles of American constitutional government and politics, including functions of political parties and other organizations. They should understand both rights and responsibilities in a democratic society, and they should recognize the value of political participation. They should be familiar with international issues that affect the United States.

Twelfth-grade students performing at the Basic level should have an understanding of what is meant by civil society, constitutional government, and politics. They should know that constitutional governments can take different forms, and they should understand the fundamental principles of American constitutional government. These students should be able to explain ways that political parties, interest groups, and the media contribute to elections, and they should be able to point out sources of information about public policy issues. They should understand that both power and rights must be limited in a free society. They should be able to identify those traits that make people responsible citizens, and they should be able to describe forms of political participation available in a democracy and recognize reasons that such participation is important. These students should be able to provide simple interpretations of non-text-based information, like maps, charts, tables, graphs, and cartoons. Finally, they should be familiar with international issues that affect the United States.

Proficient (174)

Twelfth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should have a good understanding of how constitutions can limit the power of government and support the rule of law. They should be able to describe similarities and differences among constitutional systems of government, and they should be able to explain fundamental American democratic values, their applications, and their contribution to expanding political participation. They should understand the structure of American government and be able to evaluate activities of political parties, interest groups, and media in public affairs. They should be able to explain the importance of political participation, public service, and political leadership. They should be able to describe major elements of American foreign policy and the performance of major international organizations.

Twelfth-grade students performing at the Proficient level should have a good understanding of how constitutions can limit the power of government and support the rule of law. They should be able to distinguish between parliamentary systems of government and those based on separate and shared powers, and they should be able to describe the structure and functions of American government. These students should be able to identify issues in which fundamental democratic values and principles are in conflict—liberty and equality, individual rights and the common good, and majority rule and minority rights, for example—and they should be able to take and defend positions on these issues. They should be able to evaluate ways that law protects individual rights and promotes the common good in American society. They should understand how the application of fundamental principles of American constitutional democracy has expanded participation in public life, and they should be able to explain how citizens can work individually and collectively to monitor and influence public policy. These students should understand the importance and means of participation in political life at the national, state, and local levels. They should be able to evaluate contributions made by political parties, interest groups, and the media to the development of public policy, and they should be able to explain how public service and political leadership contribute to American democracy. They should understand how American foreign policy is made and carried out, and they should be able to evaluate the performance of major international organizations. Finally, these students should be able to discuss reasons for and consequences of conflicts that arise when international disputes cannot be resolved peacefully.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Advanced (204)

Twelfth-grade students performing at the Advanced level should have a thorough and mature understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of various forms of constitutional democracy. They should be able to explain fully the structure of American government and the political process. They should understand differences between American ideals and realities, and they should be able to explain past and present responses to those differences. They should understand why civic dispositions and individual and collective political actions sustain democracy. They should be able to explain objectives and consequences of American foreign policy.

Twelfth-grade students performing at the Advanced level should have a thorough and mature understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of various forms of constitutional democracy. They should be able to discuss advantages and disadvantages of confederal, federal, and unitary systems of government, as well as strengths and weaknesses of parliamentary systems of government when compared with those based on separate and shared powers. These students should be able to explain how the structure of American government and the nation's social and political cultures serve one another. They should know which level and agency of government to contact to express their opinions or influence public policy. They should be able to explain and evaluate past and present individual and collective political actions aimed at narrowing the gap between American ideals and national reality. They should understand how elections help determine public policies, and they should be able to evaluate public policy issues in which fundamental values and principles are in conflict—liberty and equality, individual rights and the common good, and majority rule and minority rights, for example. These students should be able to evaluate the validity and emotional appeal of past and present political communication. They should be able to explain how civic dispositions such as civility, tolerance, and respect for law are important for preserving democracy, and they should be able to evaluate the many forms of participation in public affairs. Finally, they should be able to explain how American foreign policy is made and carried out and evaluate its consequences.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Achievement Levels: Sample Items

Interpreting the Data

Because a representative sample of students at each grade level is selected to take the NAEP, each assessment exercise is administered to a relatively small subsample of students in each grade. Typically, around 10,000 students are assessed in each grade, and each item is administered to just under 2,000 students. The values reported in the tables accompanying each item are probability estimates of performance at each level of achievement for students at each grade level tested in NAEP. The data reported for the sample items show the probability of a correct response to multiple choice items and of a specific score on items requiring students to construct a response. The probabilities are estimates of how students scoring within each range of achievement on the NAEP score scale would perform on each item. These probabilities are, in fact, averages of performance within each achievement level. Some students who score within the Basic range of achievement, for example, will answer a specific multiple choice item correctly and some will not. Furthermore, student performance within the Basic range of achievement may be very near the lower boundary, around the middle, or very near the upper boundary, that is, approaching the Proficient level of achievement. The probabilities reported here are weighted averages to represent performance across the range, with more weight given to scores in the middle of the achievement ranges.

Here is a suggested way to read the data for multiple choice items: "Students performing in the (Basic/Proficient/Advanced) score range have (X) probability of answering this item correctly."

For constructed response items, here is a suggested way to read the data: "Students performing in the (Basic/Proficient/Advanced) score range have (X) probability of giving a response scored at the indicated level (1, 2, 3, etc.) for this sample item."

Grade 4 Sample 1—Basic Performance

Who has the right to vote in the United States?

Ⓐ Citizens of other countries who are visiting the United States

Ⓑ Everybody in the United States who reads English

Ⓒ Everyone who has taken a course in United States government

● Ⓓ Citizens of the United States who are at least 18 years old

Probability of correct response[2]	
Basic	84%
Proficient	98%
Advanced	100%

Grade 4 Sample 2—Basic Performance

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

What does the sentence "I pledge allegiance to the flag" mean?

● Ⓐ I promise to be loyal to the ideals of the United States.

Ⓑ I promise to salute the flag when I see it in parades.

Ⓒ I promise to join the army of the United States.

Ⓓ I promise to like all the laws of the United States.

Probability of correct response	
Basic	68%
Proficient	89%
Advanced	100%

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 4 Sample 3—Proficient Performance

In democracies citizens elect people to make laws for them because

Ⓐ that way they know who the most popular people are

Ⓑ that way the most popular people are the ones who get to make the laws

Ⓒ most people already agree about what laws they should have

● Ⓓ it is easier than having everyone vote on every decision

Probability of correct response	
Basic	45%
Proficient	66%
Advanced	85%

Grade 4 Sample 4—Proficient Performance

Ben sees another sign on the door of the movie theater. It says:

No Food Or Drinks May Be Brought In From The Outside

Is this an example of a rule or a law? Fill in the oval of your answer below and tell your reasons for choosing the answer you did.

● RULE ○ LAW

I chose that answer because

At some other places you can bring food or drinks inside like a resturant or your Mom's and Dad's work.

Probability of a score of 1	
Basic	37%
Proficient	62%
Advanced	84%

Scoring guide

2= Complete: "Rule" is marked and response shows an understanding that governments (legislatures) make laws, while in this example the theater owner or manager simply decided not to allow food or drinks in the theater.

1= Partial: "Rule" is marked and response explains that the rule is specific only to this theater, OR that this is not the case at other theaters, OR that laws must be obeyed by everyone.

0= Unacceptable: "Law" is marked, OR "Rule" is marked, but explanation is weak (e.g., "A law is more serious") or absent.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 4 Sample 5—Advanced Performance

(See question from Grade 4 Sample 4)

Is this an example of a rule or a law? Fill in the oval of your answer below and tell your reasons for choosing the answer you did.

● RULE ○ LAW

I chose that answer because

They are making a rule for the movies not the state.

Probability of a score of 2	
Basic	14%
Proficient	33%
Advanced	60%

See scoring guide from Grade 4 Sample 4

Grade 4 Sample 6—Advanced Performance

Scott wants to be a police officer when he grows up. He says the police get to wear fancy uniforms with badges, use handcuffs, and drive cars as fast as they want. What is wrong with Scott's ideas about why he wants to be a police officer?

He isn't thinking about what he has to do.

Think about the things police officers do in their work. What are two good reasons to be a police officer?

1. to make places safer

2. to help people.

Probability of a score of 3	
Basic	24%
Proficient	44%
Advanced	64%

Scoring guide

3 = Complete: Gives a valid explanation of the flaws in Scott's ideas about police officers and offers two important things that police officers do.

2 = Acceptable: Identifies what is wrong with Scott's ideas about being a police officer and offers one good reason for being a police officer, OR does not identify what is wrong with Scott's ideas, but offers two good reasons for being a police officer.

1 = Partial: Offers one good reason for being an officer but no explanation of the problems with Scott's ideas, OR correctly identifies what is wrong with Scott's ideas, but offers no good reasons for being a police officer.

0 = Unacceptable: Does not recognize that Scott's reasons are superficial or untrue and does not give good reasons (or gives superficial reasons) for being a police officer.

Grade 8 Sample 1—Basic Performance

Probability of correct response	
Basic	60%
Proficient	85%
Advanced	96%

The following question refers to the Bill of Rights of the United States Constitution below. You may refer to the Bill of Rights as you answer the questions, but you do not need to read it before you read the questions.

AMENDMENT 1. *RELIGION, SPEECH, ASSEMBLY, PETITION*
Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

AMENDMENT 2. *RIGHT TO BEAR ARMS*
A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed.

AMENDMENT 3. *QUARTERING OF SOLDIERS*
No Soldier shall in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

AMENDMENT 4. *SEARCHES AND SEIZURES*
The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

AMENDMENT 5. *GRAND JURIES, DOUBLE JEOPARDY, SELF-INCRIMINATION, DUE PROCESS, EMINENT DOMAIN*
No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.

AMENDMENT 6. *CRIMINAL COURT PROCEDURES*
In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the State and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law, and to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him; to have compulsory process for obtaining witnesses in his favor, and to have the assistance of counsel for his defense.

AMENDMENT 7. *TRIAL BY JURY IN COMMON-LAW CASES*
In Suits at common law, where the value in controversy shall exceed twenty dollars, the right of trial by jury shall be preserved, and no fact tried by a jury, shall be otherwise re-examined in any Court of the United States, than according to the rules of the common law.

AMENDMENT 8. *BAILS, FINES, AND PUNISHMENT*
Excessive bail shall not be required, nor excessive fines imposed, nor cruel and unusual punishments inflicted.

AMENDMENT 9. *RIGHTS RETAINED BY THE PEOPLE*
The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

AMENDMENT 10. *RIGHTS RESERVED TO THE STATES*
The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.

According to the Bill of Rights, what is true about the rights described in the Constitution?

Ⓐ People have no guaranteed rights other than those listed in the Bill of Rights.

Ⓑ Rights not listed in the Bill of Rights are not recognized in the United States.

Ⓒ The federal government, but not state governments, can interfere with the people's rights.

● Ⓓ The fact that only some rights are listed does not mean that the people have no others.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 8 Sample 2—Basic Performance

Probability of correct response	
Basic	74%
Proficient	93%
Advanced	98%

The following question is based on the passage below.

> One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: There are *just* laws and there are *unjust* laws. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws....
>
> —Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," 1963

Reprinted by arrangement with The Heirs to the Estate of Martin Luther King, Jr., c/o Writers House, Inc. as agent for the proprietor. Copyright 1963 by Martin Luther King, Jr., renewed 1991 by Coretta Scott King.

What response to an unjust law is most consistent with the ideas of Martin Luther King, Jr.?

(A) Leaving the country rather than obeying the law

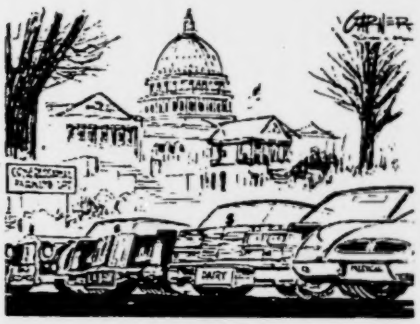
(B) Engaging the police in open battle

(C) Urging people to carry guns to protect themselves

● (D) Taking part in peaceful demonstrations and boycotts

Grade 8 Sample 3—Proficient Performance

Probability of correct response	
Basic	44%
Proficient	74%
Advanced	92%



©1976, The Commercial Appeal, Memphis, TN 38103. Used with permission. Notice: This cartoon may not be copied, downloaded, or reproduced in any form or medium without express, written permission from The Commercial Appeal.

What is the main message of the cartoon above?

(A) Even though members of Congress say that they want to protect the environment, they drive big, gas-guzzling cars.

● (B) Well-funded special interest groups have privileged access to Congress.

(C) Labor and business agree on which policies Congress should follow.

(D) People with money play no role in the political process.

Grade 8 Sample 4—Proficient Performance

Give two specific examples of how the United States Constitution limits the power of the government.

1. It gives people the freedom of speech so people can speak out and not get beat up.

2. We can not have a king because he will tell us what to do

Probability of a score of 1	
Basic	34%
Proficient	68%
Advanced	91%

Scoring guide

2 = Complete: Describes two ways in which the United States Constitution limits government.

1 = Partial: Describes one way in which the United States Constitution limits government.

0 = Unacceptable: Does not correctly describe any ways in which the United States Constitution limits government.

Grade 8 Sample 5—Advanced Performance

Give two specific examples of how the United States Constitution limits the power of the government.

1. Through separation of powers.

2. Through Judicial Review.

Probability of a score of 2	
Basic	9%
Proficient	33%
Advanced	66%

Scoring guide

2 = Complete: Describes two ways in which the United States Constitution limits government.

1 = Partial: Describes one way in which the United States Constitution limits government.

0 = Unacceptable: Does not correctly describe any ways in which the United States Constitution limits government.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 8 Sample 6—Advanced Performance

The following question is based on the passage below.

> One may well ask, "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer is found in the fact that there are two types of laws: There are *just* laws and there are *unjust* laws. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws....
>
> —Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," 1963

Reprinted by arrangement with The Heirs to the Estate of Martin Luther King, Jr., c/o Writers House, Inc. as agent for the proprietor. Copyright 1963 by Martin Luther King, Jr., renewed 1991 by Coretta Scott King.

Dr. King believed that "one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws" through acts of civil disobedience.

Give one argument in support of Dr. King's position.

If Congress passed a law requiring segregation it would be the right of an individual to peaceably protest because such a law would contradict the proposition that all men are created equal.

What are possible negative consequences of people using civil disobedience to challenge the law? Give one example.

Police may have to use force to disperse protestors, such as at Kent State.

Probability of a score of 2	
Basic	14%
Proficient	42%
Advanced	72%

Scoring guide

2 = Complete: Gives a *reasonable argument* in favor of Dr. King's position and explains *one possible negative consequence* of opposing the law through civil disobedience.

1 = Partial: Gives an argument either for Dr. King's position, OR explains one possible negative consequence of opposing the law through civil disobedience, OR gives weak or incomplete arguments for both parts of the question (e.g., "Unjust laws are bad for society").

0 = Unacceptable: Gives no valid arguments (e.g., "All laws are unjust").

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 12 Sample 1—Basic Performance

While most voters identify with a political party, they do not always vote for candidates from that political party. Describe two factors besides political party identification that influence voter preference.

1. Unfortunately, the appearance and popularity of a candidate. People who are not all that interested usually end up voting for a name they recognize not a candidate that deserves the office.
2. Voters also identify with the character and moral values of a candidate This is a reason some candidates win votes from people who are not in their party.

Probability of a score of 2	
Basic	67%
Proficient	85%
Advanced	94%

Scoring guide

2 = Complete: Names two important factors besides political party identification that influence voter preference.

1 = Partial: Names one appropriate factor besides political party identification that influences voter preference.

0 = Unacceptable: Does not name any important factors besides political party identification that influence voter preference (e.g., "candidate has a nice voice"), OR offers inappropriate factors (e.g., "I had a bad day").

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 12 Sample 2—Basic Performance

Probability of correct response	
Basic	56%
Proficient	92%
Advanced	99%

The following question is based on the excerpt below from the Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954).

> Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities...may be equal, deprive children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does.
>
> To separate them from others of similar age and qualifications solely on the basis of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status and community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone.... Whatever may have been the extent of psychological knowledge at the time of *Plessy v. Ferguson,* this finding is amply supported by modern authority. Any language in *Plessy v. Ferguson* contrary to this finding is rejected.
>
> We conclude that in the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.

How did the decision affect the relationship between the federal government and state and local governments?

- **(A)** The federal government exerted greater influence in a policy area that had been dominated by states and municipalities.
- (B) The federal government began directly determining what would be taught in public classrooms.
- (C) State governments were restricted in their ability to mandate the teaching of religion in public schools.
- (D) State and local governments became less dependent on federal funding for education.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 12 Sample 3—Proficient Performance

Describe *one* policy area in which *state* governments affect the lives of citizens.

States control gambling laws for the state.

Describe *one* way in which citizens can affect *state* government's policy in this area.

Through voting, signed petitions, and alerting Representatives, citizens may influence laws.

Probability of a score of 2	
Basic	38%
Proficient	66%
Advanced	86%

Scoring guide

2 = Complete: Properly identifies a function of state government and suggests a way citizens could affect that policy.

1 = Partial: Identifies an area in which state governments affect citizens but does not say how citizens affect the government, OR addresses both parts of the question, but is vague or incomplete (e.g., "state governments can pass laws, but citizens can say they don't like them").

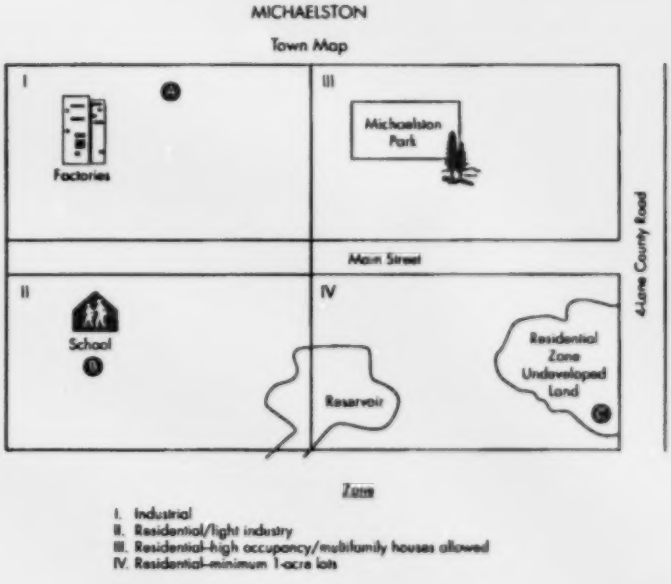
0 = Unacceptable: Does not give an appropriate description for either part of the question—for example, describes a federal instead of a state function.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 12 Sample 4—Proficient Performance

Probability of correct response	
Basic	45%
Proficient	67%
Advanced	88%

The following question refers to the map below. The town in the map, Michaelston, needs to create a waste landfill. The landfill will be located at site A, B, or C shown on the map.



The state government would be most likely to become involved in the decision about where to locate the landfill if developers tried to put the landfill on a site that

(A) was near an army base within the state

(B) created conflicts among the citizens of the town

(C) was near a town park

● (D) was likely to affect agriculture in other counties in the state

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Grade 12 Sample 5—Advanced Performance

The following question refers to the map for Grade 12 Sample 4.

Is the landfill most likely to be located at site A, B, or C? Explain why it is more likely to be located at that site than at the other two sites.

Site A. This is a factory. They have waste too. The waste would go to the landfill. They shouldn't go near the school because of kids. They shouldn't go near choice C because of the reservoir & residential areas.

Probability of a score of 2	
Basic	23%
Proficient	39%
Advanced	58%

Scoring guide

2 = Complete: Identifies site A or C and explains why that site is the most likely to be chosen, OR identifies one thing wrong with each of the other sites.

1 = Partial: Identifies site A or C but gives a weak or vague explanation as to why it is the most likely to be chosen, for example, "Site C is the least dangerous."

0 = Unacceptable: Identifies site A or C but does not explain why it is most likely to be chosen. Site B is NOT an acceptable site choice.

Grade 12 Sample 6—Advanced Performance

Explain two ways that democratic society benefits from citizens actively participating in the political process.

1. People rule - this means that ~~after~~ the majority of the people will like the decisions made by govt.

2. Also, people will feel that they have an important role in govt. And will take the initiative to act in a civilized way.

Probability of a score of 2	
Basic	5%
Proficient	21%
Advanced	54%

Scoring guide

2 = Complete: Describes two ways in which society as a whole benefits from citizen involvement. Emphasis is placed on the benefits to society rather than to an individual.

1 = Partial: Describes one salutary effect. The other description, if present, is either trivial or is from the point of view of how citizen participation benefits individuals rather than society.

0 = Unacceptable: Does not describe any of the salutary effects of citizen involvement in politics.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Performance Data

Exhibit 1. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 4: Percentage of Students At or Above Each Achievement Level

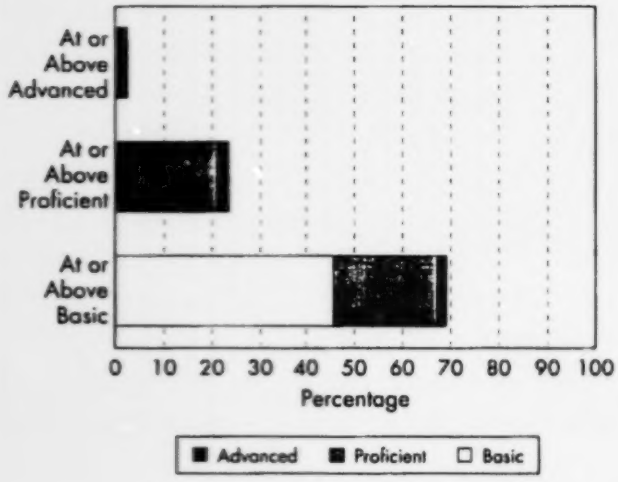


Exhibit 2. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 4: Percentage of Students Within Each Achievement Level

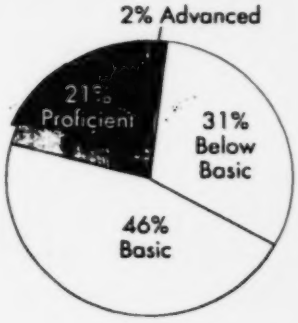


Exhibit 3. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 8: Percentage of Students At or Above Each Achievement Level

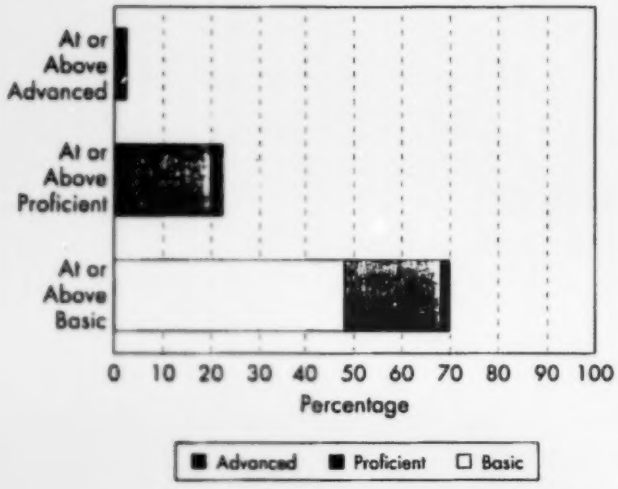
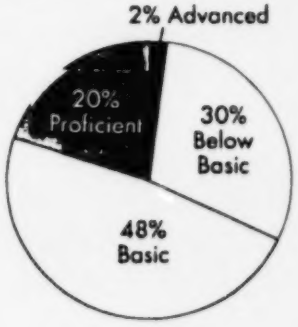


Exhibit 4. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 8: Percentage of Students Within Each Achievement Level



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Exhibit 5. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 12: Percentage of Students At or Above Each Achievement Level

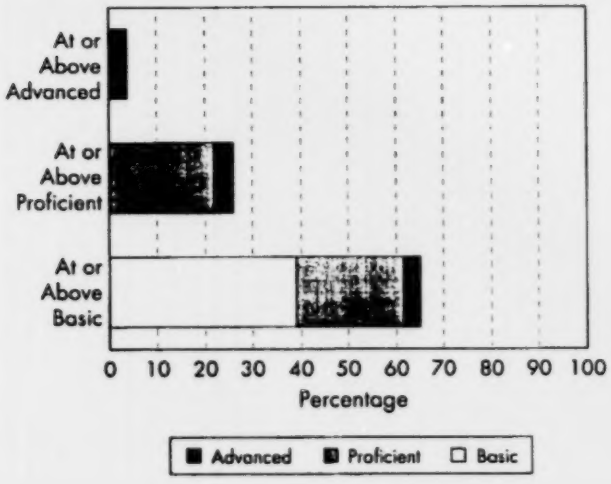


Exhibit 6. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 12: Percentage of Students Within Each Achievement Level

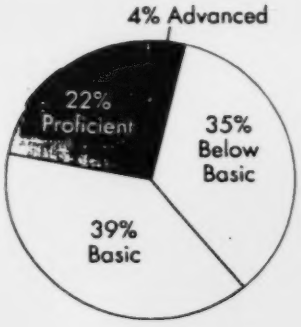
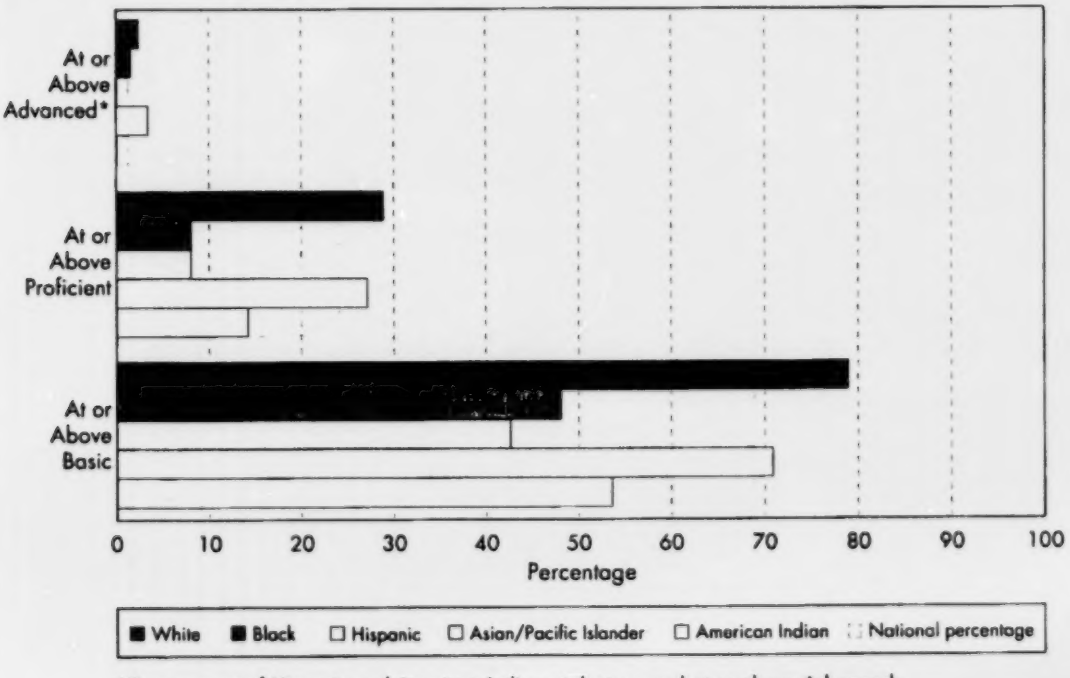
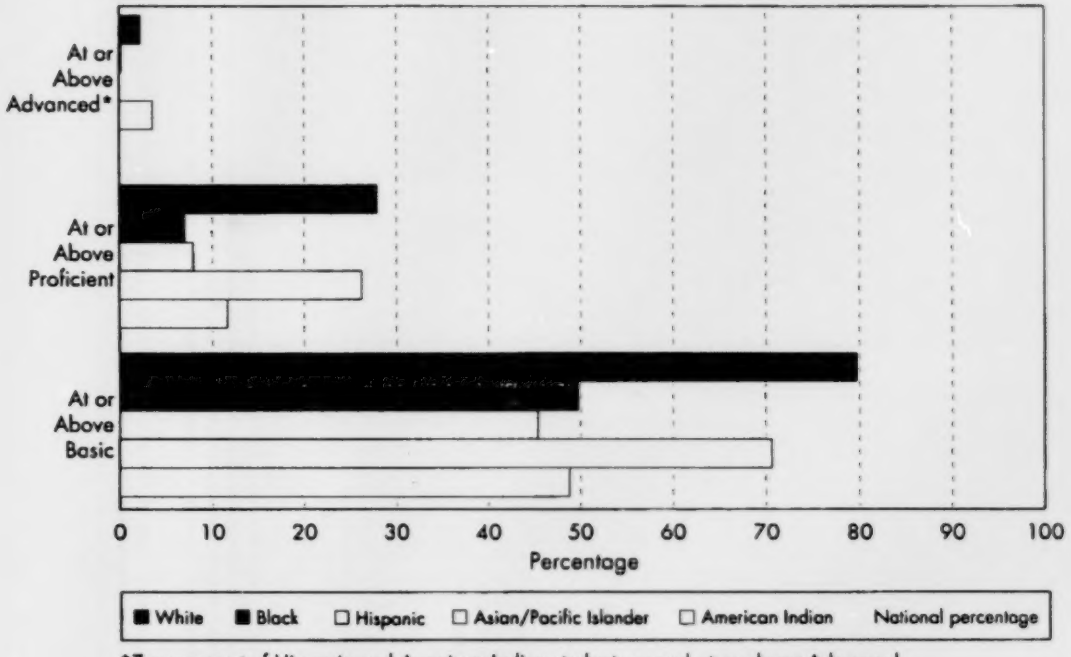


Exhibit 7. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 4: Percentage of Students At or Above Each Achievement Level by Race/Ethnicity



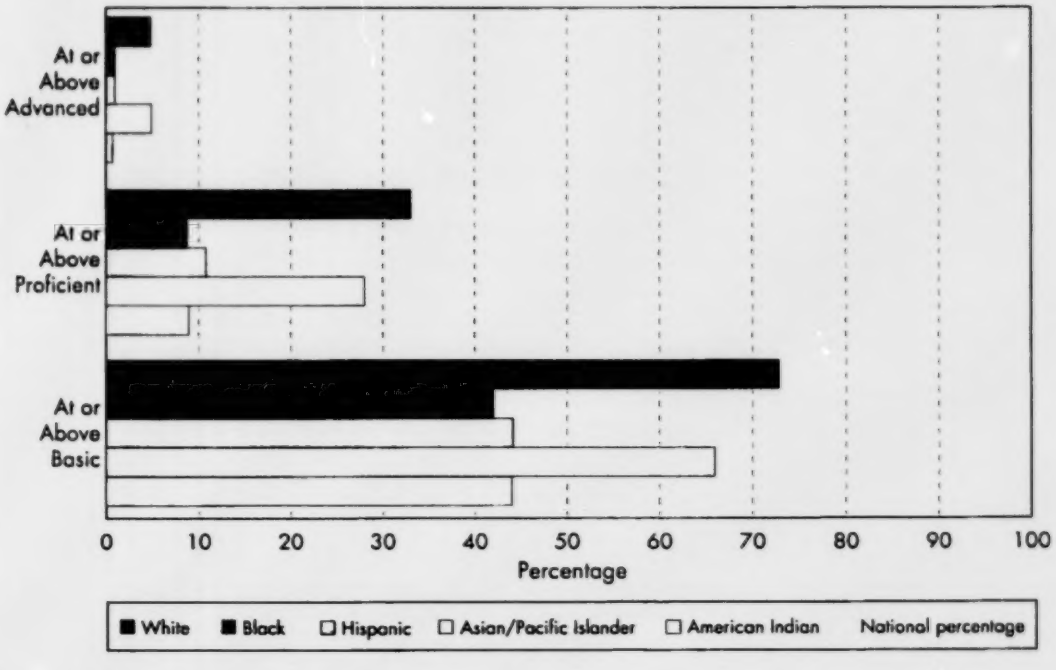
*Zero percent of Hispanic and American Indian students scored at or above Advanced.

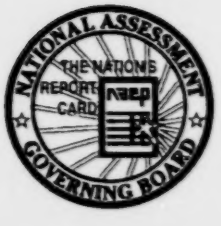
Exhibit 8. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 8: Percentage of Students At or Above Each Achievement Level by Race/Ethnicity



*Zero percent of Hispanic and American Indian students scored at or above Advanced.

Exhibit 9. 1998 Civics NAEP, Grade 12: Percentage of Students At or Above Each Achievement Level by Race/Ethnicity




NATIONAL ASSESSMENT
THE NATION'S
REPORT
CARD
NAEP
GOVERNING BOARD

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

[ ] This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.

[X] This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").